

Old Turkic

Old Turkic (also **East Old Turkic**, Orkhon Turkic, Old Uyghur) is the earliest attested form of Turkic, found in Göktürk and Uyghur inscriptions dating from about the 7th century AD to the 13th century. It is the oldest attested member of the Orkhon branch of Turkic, which is extant in the modern Western Yugur language. However, it is not the ancestor of the language now called Uighur; the contemporaneous ancestor of Uighur to the west is called Middle Turkic, later Chagatai or Turki.

Old Turkic is attested in a number of scripts, including the Orkhon-Yenisei runiform script, the Old Uyghur alphabet (a form of the Sogdian alphabet), the Brāhmī script, the Manichean alphabet, and the Perso-Arabic script.

Old Turkic often refers not to a single language, but collectively to the closely related and mutually intelligible stages of various Common Turkic branches that were spoken during the late 1st millennium AD.

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Old Turkic	
	Old Uyghur
Region	Central Asia and Mongolia
Era	evolved into other Turkic languages
Language family	<p>Turkic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common Turkic ▪ Siberian ▪ Old Turkic
Writing system	Old Turkic, Uyghur alphabet
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	<p>Either:</p> <p>otk – Old Turkish</p> <p>oui – Old Uighur</p>
Linguist List	<p>otk (http://multitree.org/codes/otk)</p> <p>Old Turkish</p> <p>oui (http://multitree.org/codes/oui)</p> <p>Old Uighur</p>
Glottolog	<p>oldu1238 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/oldu1238)^[1]</p>

Sources

The sources of Old Turkic are divided into two corpora:

- the 7th to 10th century Orkhon inscriptions in Mongolia and the Yenisey basin (**Orkhon Turkic**, or Old Turkic proper).
- 9th to 13th century Uyghur manuscripts from Xinjiang (Old Uyghur), in various scripts including Brahmi, the Manichaean, Syriac and Uyghur alphabets, treating religious (Buddhist, Manichaean and Nestorian), legal, literary, folkloric and astrologic material as well as personal correspondence.

Writing systems

The Old Turkic script (also known variously as Göktürk script, Orkhon script, Orkhon-Yenisey script) is the alphabet used by the Göktürks and other early Turkic khanates during the 8th to 10th centuries to record the Old Turkic language.^[2]

The script is named after the Orkhon Valley in Mongolia where early 8th-century inscriptions were discovered in an 1889 expedition by Nikolai Yadrintsev.^[3]

This writing system was later used within the Uyghur Khaganate. Additionally, a Yenisei variant is known from 9th-century Yenisei Kirghiz inscriptions, and it has likely cousins in the Talas Valley of Turkestan and the Old Hungarian alphabet of the 10th century. Words were usually written from right to left. Variants of the script were found from Mongolia and Xinjiang in the east to the Balkans in the west. The preserved inscriptions were dated to between the 8th and 10th centuries.

Phonology

Vowels

	Front		Back	
	Unr.	Rnd.	Unr.	Rnd.
<u>Close</u>	i	y	ɯ	u
<u>Mid</u>	e	ø		o
<u>Open</u>			a	

Rounded vowels may only occur in the initial syllable. Length is distinctive for all vowels; while most of its daughter languages have lost the distinction, many of these preserve it in the case of /e/ with a height distinction, where the long phoneme developed into a more closed vowel than the short counterpart.

Consonants

	Labial	Dental	Post-alveolar	Velar	Uvular
<u>Nasal</u>	m	n	ŋ	ɳ	
<u>Stop</u>	p b	t d	tʃ	k g	q ɣ
<u>Fricative</u>		s z	f		
<u>Tap/Flap</u>		r			
<u>Approximant</u>		ɿ l	j		

Old Turkic is highly restrictive in which consonants words can begin with: /p/, /d/, /g/, /g/, /ɣ/, /l/, /r/, /n/, /ŋ/, /m/, /ʃ/, and /z/ are not allowed in a word-initial position. The only exceptions are 𐰃𐰃 (ne, “what, which”) and its derivatives, and some early assimilations of word-initial /b/ to /m/ preceding a nasal in a word such as 𐰃𐰃 (men, “I”).

Nominal suffixes

This is a partial list of nominal suffixes attested to in Old Turkic and known usages.

Denominal

The following have been classified by Gerard Clauson as denominal noun suffixes.

Suffix	Usages	Translation
-ça	ança	at least one
-ke	sigirke yipke	sinew string/thread
-la/-le	ayla tünle körkle	thus, like that) yesterday, night, north) beautiful
-suk/-sük	bağırsuk	liver, entrails
-ra/-re	içre	inside, within
-ya/-ye	bérye yırya	here north
-çıl/-çıl	igçıl	sickly
-ğıll/-gil	uçgil kırğıl	triangular grey haired
-nti	ékkinti	second
-dam/-dem	tegridem	god-like
tırtı:/-türti	içtirti	inside, within
-kı:/-ki	aşnuki üzeki evdeki	former on or above in the house
-an/-en/-un	oğlan eren	children men, gentlemen
-ğu:/-gü	ençgү tuzğu buğrağu	tranquil, at peace food given to a traveller as a gift woodwork
-a:ğu:/-e:gü:	üçegü içegü	three together inside human body
-dan/-dun	otun izden	firewood track, trace
-ar/-er	birer azar	one each a few
-layu:/-leyü	börileyü	like a wolf
-daş/-deş	kadaş yerdeş	kinsman compatriot
-mış/-miş	altmış yetmiş	sixty seventy
-gey	küçgey	violent
-çak/-çek and -çuk/-çük	ğırçak	spindle-whorl
-k/ (after vowels and -r) -ak/-ek (the normal forms)/-ik/-ik/-uk/-ük(rare forms)	ortuk	middle partner
-dak/-dek and(?) -duk/-düük	bağırdak beligdek burunduk	wrap terrifying nose ring
-ğuk/-gük	çamğuk	obectionable
-mak/-mek	kögüzmek	breastplate
-muk/-a:muk	solamuk	left-handed (pejorative?)

<i>-nak</i>	<i>bakanak</i>	"frog in a horse's hoof" (from <i>baka</i> frog)
<i>-duruk/-dürük</i>	<i>boyunduruk</i>	yoke

Deverbal

The following have been classified by Gerard Clauson as deverbal suffixes.

Suffix	Usages	Translation
<i>-a/-e/-i:/-i/-u/-ü</i>	<i>oprı adrı keçe egri köni ötrü</i>	hollow, valley branched, forked evening, night crooked straight, upright, lawful then, so
<i>-ğa/-ge</i>	<i>kısga öge bilge kölige tilge</i>	short wise wise shadow slice
<i>-ğma/-gme</i>	<i>tanığma</i>	riddle
<i>-çı/-çi</i>	<i>otaçı: okıcı</i>	healer priest
<i>-ğuçı/-güçi</i>	<i>ayğuçı bitigüçi</i>	councilor scribe
<i>-di/-di</i>	<i>üdründi ögdi alkadı sökti</i>	chosen, parted, separated, scattered customs praised bran
<i>-tı/-ti</i>	<i>arıtı uzatı tüketi</i>	completely, clean lengthily completely
<i>-du</i>	<i>eğdu umkul süktü</i>	curved knife desire, covetousness campaigning
<i>-ğu:/-gü</i>	<i>bileğü kedgü oğlağü</i>	whetstone clothing gently nurtured
<i>-ingü</i>	<i>bilingü etingü yeringü salingü</i>	be in the know be prepared disgusted be moving violently
<i>-ğa:ç/-geç</i>	<i>kışgaç</i>	pincers
<i>-ğuç/-güç</i>	<i>bıçguç</i>	scissors
<i>-maç/-meç</i>	<i>tutmaç</i>	"saved" noodle dish
<i>-ğut/-güt</i>	<i>alpağut bayağut</i>	warrior merchant

Literary works

- Uyuk-Tarlak inscription (date unknown) by an unknown writer (in Yenisei Kyrgyz)
- Elegest inscription (date unknown) by an unknown writer (in Yenisei Kyrgyz)
- Orkhon Inscriptions (732 and 735) by Yollig Khagan (in Orkhon Turkic)
- Bain Tsokto inscriptions (716) by an unknown writer (in Orkhon Turkic)
- Ongin inscription (between 716 and 735) by an unknown writer (in Orkhon Turkic)
- Kul-chur inscription (between 723 and 725) a writer called "Ebizter" (in Orkhon Turkic)
- Altyn Tamgan Tarhan inscription (724) by an unknown writer (in Orkhon Turkic)
- Tariat inscriptions (between 753 and 760) by an unknown writer (in Old Uyghur)
- Choiti-Tamir inscriptions (between 753 and 756) by an unknown writer (in Old Uyghur)
- Sükhbaatar inscriptions (8th century) by an unknown writer (in Old Uyghur)
- Bombogor inscription (8th century) by an unknown writer (in Old Uyghur)
- Book of Divination (9th century) by an unknown writer (in Old Uyghur)

See also

- Old Turkic script
- Proto-Turkic
- Orkhon Turkic language

References

- Ö.D. Baatar, *Old Turkic Script*, Ulan-Baator (2008), ISBN 0-415-08200-5
- M. Erdal, *A Grammar of Old Turkic*, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 8 Uralic & Central Asia, Brill, Leiden (2004) (https://books.google.com/books?id=l4yGbsQcrBoc&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false), ISBN 90-04-10294-9.
- M. Erdal, *Old Turkic word formation: A functional approach to the lexicon*, Turcologica, Harassowitz (1991), ISBN 3-447-03084-4.
- Talat Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, Uralic and Altaic Series Vol. 69, Indiana University Publications, Mouton and Co. (1968). (review: Gerard Clauson, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, 1969); Routledge Curzon (1997), ISBN 0-7007-0869-3.
- L. Johanson, *A History of Turkic*, in: *The Turkic Languages*, eds. L. Johanson & E.A. Csato, Routledge, London (1998), ISBN 0-415-08200-5
- M. Erdal, *Old Turkic*, in: *The Turkic Languages*, eds. L. Johanson & E.A. Csato, Routledge, London (1998), ISBN 978-99929-944-0-5

1. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Old Turkic" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/oldu1238>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
2. Scharlipp, Wolfgang (2000). *An Introduction to the Old Turkish Runic Inscriptions*. Verlag auf dem Ruffel, Engelschoff. ISBN 978-3-933847-00-3.
3. Sinor, Denis (2002). "Old Turkic". *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*. 4. Paris: UNESCO. pp. 331–333.

Further reading

- Noten zu den alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei und Sibiriens (1898) (<https://archive.org/details/notenzudenaltr00vmgoog>)

- Marcel Erdal (1 January 2004). *A Grammar Of Old Turkic* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=4yGbSQcrBoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=qarakhanids+inherited+islam+uyghurs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjf58br3K7JAhWCdx4KHcORAZcQ6AEITzAJ#v=onepage&q&f=false>). BRILL. ISBN 90-04-10294-9.

External links

- Old Turkic inscriptions (with translations into English), reading lessons and tutorials (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180301044348/http://www.bitig.org/?lang=e>)
- Turkic Inscriptions of Orkhon Valley (with translations into Turkish) (<http://orhunyazitlari.blogspot.com/p/bilgekagan.html>)
- VATEC (<http://vatec2.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/>), pre-Islamic Old Turkic electronic corpus at uni-frankfurt.de.
- A Grammar of Old Turkic (http://altaica.ru/LIBRARY/turks/Erdal_OTG.pdf) by Marcel Erdal
- Old Turkic (8th century) funerary inscription (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070928051549/http://www.ats.lmu.de/lingtools/milbdb/files/index.php?file=turkicold.pdf>) (W. Schulze)
- Kuli Chor inscription complete text (<http://bitig.org/?lang=e&mod=1&tid=1&oid=18&m=1>)
- Tonyukuk inscription complete text (<http://bitig.org/?lang=e&mod=1&tid=1&oid=17&m=1>)
- Kul Tigin inscription complete text (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180624010508/http://bitig.org/?lang=e&mod=1&tid=1&oid=15&m=1>)
- Bilge Qaghan inscription complete text (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150203230249/http://www.bitig.org/?lang=e>)
- Eletmiš Yabgu (Ongin) inscription complete text (<http://bitig.org/?lang=e&mod=1&tid=1&oid=14&m=1>)
- Bayanchur Khan inscription complete text (<http://bitig.org/?lang=e&mod=1&tid=1&oid=23&m=1>)
- Ongin inscriptions (http://altaica.ru/LIBRARY/CLAUSON/Clauson_The%20Ongin%20Inscriptions%201957.pdf) by Gerard Clauson

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